

Request for Proposals (RFP) for a Cooperative Agreement for the Development and Operation of a Health Care Industry Compliance Assistance Center

I. Summary

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has funded the development and operation of compliance assistance centers (Centers) to help businesses and local governments better understand and comply with environmental regulations. EPA seeks a partner to develop and maintain a Center for the health care sector. Proposals meeting the criteria discussed below must be delivered to EPA by 5:00 p.m. February 6, 2004.

II. Background

Under the Grants Competition Policy that went into effect October 1, 2002, EPA now competes any assistance agreement or grant that will provide the recipient more than \$75,000 in a year.

A health care Center is intended as a “first-stop shop” that provides environmental management, planning, and regulatory information useful to health care personnel. The center’s environmental compliance information, tools, and services must be easy to read, easy to use, and tailored specifically to the environmental aspects of health care operations

Topic areas should include:

- Medical waste including, waste reduction, pharmaceutical and liquid waste, incineration, solidifiers, and disinfection.
- Chemical use and storage, and chemical alternatives
- Fuel storage
- Refrigeration equipment
- Boilers
- Hazardous waste management
- Pollution prevention and incentives
- State information on regulations (e.g., regulatory descriptions, summaries, contacts, available electronic permits, etc.)

To achieve this goal, the recipient must:

- Create Internet linkages and partnerships among the various health care industry groups/associations, EPA and other federal regulatory agencies, other relevant organizations, and the compliance assistance provider communities.
- Develop content (including regulatory and pollution prevention information) that will address the

needs of the health care industry.

EPA helped establish other Centers by sponsoring partnerships with industry, academics, stakeholder organizations, environmental groups, and other Agencies. The Centers provide comprehensive, easy to understand, sector-specific compliance information, tools, and services. In an effort to reduce the technological overhead cost associated with creating new Centers, EPA awarded a grant in July, 2001 to the National Center for Manufacturing Sciences (NCMS) to create a Centers Platform, that would serve as a foundation for establishing new centers. The goal of the Centers Platform is to support a large number of independent Centers, and to do so with minimal administrative overhead. Potential grant recipients may consider use of the Center Platform features and services in developing their proposal to create the health care Center. To learn more about the Center Platform, visit < www.envcap.org >.

In accordance with EPA policy encouraging competition for assistance agreements, the Agency now seeks proposals from qualified applicants who can partner with the EPA, various health care industry support organizations, and other interested parties and who have the capability both to support the continued development, operation and maintenance of a health care Center.

In general, the centers provide comprehensive, easy to understand sector-specific compliance information. The Centers can offer a variety of services, including web-sites, e-mail groups, fax-back systems, and telephone assistance, depending on the needs of the sector they are designed for. All the centers help businesses, tribes, local governments, and federal agencies identify specific regulations that apply to their activities, improve compliance with environmental regulations, and learn about pollution prevention approaches that can save money and resources. All centers can be accessed at www.assistancecenters.net.

EPA reviewed the responses to its Request for Initial Proposals, and determined that certain initial proposals met the eligibility criteria. EPA now seeks, by February 6, 2004, proposals from those eligible applicants for development and maintenance of the health care Center. EPA anticipates making approximately \$450,000 available over a five-year period for this purpose. EPA will incrementally fund each budget period and will consider funding the balance of budget requests contingent upon satisfactory progress as certified by the EPA Project Officer, the availability of funds, and EPA priorities.

III. Authority

EPA will, as its annual appropriation allows, award financial assistance to the successful applicant in the form of a cooperative agreement. As authorized by 31 U.S.C. §6305, EPA will be substantially involved in carrying out this project. Anticipated substantial involvement will include collaboration in carrying out the scope of work, technical assistance, approval of the substantive terms of contracts and subawards made with EPA funds, change of key personnel, and approval of

project phases prior to continuation of the project.

The Agreement will be funded on a “multimedia” basis under Section 103 of the Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C. §7403, Section 104 of the Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. §1254, and Section 8001 of the Solid Waste Disposal Act, 42 U.S.C. §6981. Applicants are encouraged to review these statutes and ensure that all of the activities contained in their proposals are consistent with the scope of EPA’s authority.

Funding for Compliance Assistance Centers is awarded under Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number 66.305, Compliance Assistance- Support for Services to the Regulated Community and Other Assistance Providers.

IV. Applicant Eligibility

Only those applicants that have been invited to participate following the Request for Initial Proposals are eligible.

V. Overview of the Health care Industry Compliance Assistance Center

EPA’s Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics (OPPT) has developed the Hospitals for a Healthy Environment (H2E) program. The American Hospital Association and EPA signed a landmark agreement to advance pollution prevention efforts in our nation's hospitals. The primary goal of the H2E effort is to educate health care professionals about pollution prevention opportunities in hospitals and healthcare systems. Through activities such as: the development of best practices, model plans for total waste management, resource directories, and case studies; the project hopes to provide hospitals and healthcare systems with enhanced tools for minimizing the volumes of waste generated and the use of persistent, bioaccumulative, and toxic chemicals.

The proposal must include a plan to utilize H2E Pollution Prevention tools and resources to prevent duplication. In addition, the health care Center must partner with the H2E program, utilizing the expertise and resources of this program.

Applicants should consider the following segments of the health care industry in developing their proposal:

- Hospitals
- Small hospitals and clinics
- Dental care
- Veterinary clinics
- Residential care centers

Applicants may consider the following Center resources in developing their proposal:

- Plain-language regulatory guidance
- Audit checklists
- Ask an expert feature
- Training
- Listerve(s)
- Integration of a FedSite health care virtual tour that is under development (see <http://www.epa.gov/fedsite/virtual.html> as an example of how the FedSite health care virtual tour will function)
- Integration of the Occupational Safety & Health Administration's Hospital eTool located at < <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/hospital/mainpage.html> >.
- Access to State regulations
- Vender lists for alternative chemicals, and products

VI. Project Proposal

All applicants must submit a proposal that identifies their ability to manage a Center for the health care industry. Project proposals must, at a minimum, include the following items: Executive Summary, Project Activities, the Center Management Plan, Clients Needs, and Available Technologies as outlined below. EPA will negotiate a detailed scope of work with the successful applicant. The successful applicant will be asked to submit a Standard Form 424, Application for Federal Assistance following negotiation of the work plan (See www.whitehouse.gov/OMB/grants/SF424.pdf) Please note that the final application will be subject to the Executive Order 12372 Intergovernmental Review Process. (See www.cfda.gov/public/EO12372.htm) Applicants must clearly mark information they consider Confidential Business Information (CBI). EPA will make final confidentiality decisions in accordance with Agency regulations at 40 CFR Part 2, Subpart B. The applicant should consider the following project proposal format:

Executive Summary: A summary of the planned project.

Project Activities: The proposal should include a description of the following planned activities including milestones. Describe the approach(es) to:

- Identify compliance assistance needs and close gaps in environmental compliance assistance materials and services currently provided to the health care industry
- Develop working relationship(s) with experts and national organizations devoted to compliance

- with environmental regulations at health care sites
- Conduct outreach to the health care industry and promote use of the Center.
- Explore and implement revenue generating activities to reduce the health care Center's reliance on federal funding
- As necessary, update and correct Center content
- Develop and maintain communications with health care industry stakeholders

Management Plan: A thorough discussion of how the grant will be managed, including:

- Internal Management Plan: Describe how the applicant will ensure the day to day success of the project. This description should include the proposed organizational structure, supervisory responsibilities, and a proposed staffing plan.
- External Management Plan: Project proposals must describe how the cooperative agreement recipient will solicit / maintain partners to support the health care industry compliance assistance center. Illustrate organizational structure between the primary project partners and supporting entities. Please note that all contracts for the purchase of goods and services must comply with the competitive procurement requirements of 40 CFR Part 30.
- Marketing and Outreach: A description of a marketing and outreach activity plan to promote the services provided by the health care Center.
- Financial Plan: A financial plan for the project that identifies all sources of funds. Although EPA does not require matching funds, the grant recipient is encouraged to provide information regarding resources (cash/in-kind services) that they would commit to manage the Center. The financial plan should break out planned expenditures by both activity (e.g., maintenance of the web site) and object class (e.g., personnel, travel).

Factors that EPA will evaluate in the financial plan include:

- ~ Ability to partner with other organizations to secure funding or in-kind services to reduce reliance on Federal funding.
- ~ Ability to maintain management control and track costs of the project and maintain required records on funding.

Past Experience and Qualifications of Key Personnel: Project proposals must:

- Describe the applicant's experience in developing and maintaining web based environmental compliance assistance services, or similar projects, and its experience in working with environmental compliance issues related to the health care industry .
- Provide information on its experience in managing Federal financial assistance, including the results of audits or monitoring by the awarding agency.
- Include a description of the qualifications and experience of key personnel and their responsibilities. A detailed description of how the qualification and/or experience of each key

personnel match with his/her responsibilities is important.

Clients Needs: Understanding the environmental needs of the health care industry is critical to the success and sustainability of the health care center. Project proposals should address the following areas. How will:

- The applicant ensure the web site is useful to the targeted user group(s)?
- The experiences of the key personnel enhance the center's operation?
- The applicant identify the environmental compliance needs of the health care industry?

Center Technologies/Configuration: The ability to maintain the Center site and associated software is critical. Project proposals should address how:

- The recipient will assure that operation and technologies meet the needs of the users as identified by contact with the health care sector.

Collaboration with Other Compliance Assistance Providers: The proposal must explain how the health care Center will interact and collaborate with other compliance assistance providers, government agencies, and organizations. Specifically, the proposal should address the following:

- How the applicant will collaborate with other compliance assistance providers to leverage limited resources.
- How the applicant will utilize H2E pollution prevention tools and resources and coordinate Center activities with the H2E program.
- Methods that the applicant will use to promote the use of the health care Center among other compliance assistance providers.
- How the applicant will evaluate and demonstrate the success of the health care industry Center yearly, including output measurements and, measurements of risk reduction or compliance improvements for companies that use the center.

VII. Pre-application Assistance

Eligible and interested applicants may contact Tracy Back (202/564-7076 or back.tracy@epa.gov) with questions regarding this Request for Proposals. EPA will post answers to significant or frequently asked questions and list the organizations that are invited to submit a full project proposal at <http://www.epa.gov/compliance/assistance/centers/index.html>. Applicants are encouraged to review these questions and answers prior to submitting initial proposals. Please note, the Agency cannot provide guidance on proposal development or other advice that may provide a competitive advantage.

VIII. Proposal Evaluation Criteria

EPA will use the following criteria to rank applications. Each proposal will be given a high, medium or low rating for each criterion. Each criterion will receive equal weight when EPA reviewers determine the overall merit of the proposal. Based on the ratings, EPA reviewers will select up to two proposals for consideration by the Agency selecting official.

1. Comprehensiveness of proposed approach to service delivery.
2. Innovations that may enhance compliance assistance services available to the health care industry.
3. Demonstrated understanding of environmental compliance challenges faced by the health care industry.
4. Cost effectiveness and efficiency of proposed activities.
5. Qualifications and experience of key personnel in relation to their responsibilities.
6. Previous performance history on similar projects.
7. Soundness of approach to collaborating with other organizations.
8. Soundness of approach to outreach to all segments of the health care sector.
9. Soundness of proposed revenue generating activities that may reduce the center's reliance on Federal funding.

Any disputes that arise during the selection process will be resolved in accordance with 40 CFR 330.63 and Part 31, subpart F. (See web-site at <http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/index.html>.) Please note that EPA reserves the right to reject all proposals or applications and make no awards.

IX. Proposal Submission

Interested applicants should email the proposal to Tracy Back at back.tracy@epa.gov and submit one copy of the proposal to the following address by February 6, 2004.

Tracy Back (2224A)
Office of Compliance, OECA
US Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460

Each proposal should not exceed 30 pages and it should include all of the information requested in this solicitation with a break down of budget for each category. A team of EPA personnel will evaluate the proposals based on the criteria set forth in Section VI and identify two applications for further consideration. An authorized Agency Approval Official in OECA will select the final applicant. An EPA award official will make the final award. EPA expects to select the final cooperative agreement recipient by February 27, 2004. The project will not be funded until EPA's operating budget for 2004 receives final approval. For questions, please contact Tracy Back by phone at (202) 564-7076, fax at (202) 564-0009 or e-mail at back.tracy@epa.gov.

